

Q Fever

What is it all about?

The bacterium *Coxiella burnetii* is a pathogen which causes a human and animal disease called Q fever or coxiellosis.

The pathogen can be transferred from animals to humans. In Germany, humans mainly get infected by the pathogen during lambing season. Cattle and other species are less frequently the source of Q fever infections in humans.

Q Fever in sheep & goats

Sheep and goats can get infected with *Coxiella burnetii* by inhaling dust or droplets containing bacteria in the environment or get infected via other routes.

Infected small ruminants shed *Coxiella burnetii* in large quantities together with birth fluids and the afterbirth, especially when giving birth. In addition, there is shedding of bacteria via milk, urine and faeces.

Especially sheep can experience an infection with *Coxiella burnetii* without any clinical signs of disease. However, the following symptoms indicative of Q fever should be taken seriously in small ruminants:

- abortion
- stillbirth
- delivery of weak offspring (lambs/calves) abortion
- delayed expulsion of the afterbirth

Q fever in my herd/flock — What to do if Q fever is suspected?

Should your sheep or goats show signs of Q fever, have your animals examined by your veterinarian.

The most meaningful test for verifying Q fever is the molecular biological analysis of afterbirth material, dead lambs/kids/calves, vaginal swabs or preputial swabs for detecting pathogen DNA. Using this analysis, a current shedding of *Coxiella burnetii* can be detected.

Blood analysis of antibodies does not reliably detect an acute infection, however, shows a recent infection.

What to do with a diagnosis?

Q fever is a reportable animal disease. When Q fever is detected in your herd/flock spreading of infection to other animals and to humans should be prevented.

Q fever is a risk for the health of humans and small ruminants.

Take measures in veterinary herd health management as well as in hygiene!

Q Fever Control Measures:

- ✓ Make sure births and shearing occur in closed premises.
- ✓ Store afterbirth material in a closed container until they will be disposed of by rendering plants (animal by-products processing plants).
- ✓ Disinfect your working clothes and working material.
- ✓ Inform your colleagues and family members about necessary protective and hygiene measures.
- ✓ Post a sign near your stables:
"Valuable livestock – Do Not Enter.
Authorized Personnel Only."
- ✓ Prevent non-authorized people from getting access to your sheep and goats.
- ✓ Don't offer raw milk or raw milk products to consumers and stand down from drinking raw milk and eating raw milk products. The process of pasteurisation results in inactivation of the pathogen.
- ✓ Store sheep and goat manure under foil for 9 months as well as away from the population, before manure is applied to fields.
- ✓ Have your flock/herd vaccinated against *Coxiella burnetii*.

TIP Further information as to Q fever:
www.q-gaps.de or info@q-gaps.de